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Chairman: Mr. Balarezo ..... (Peru)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.15 a.m.

Agenda item 86: Implementation of the outcome of the United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II) and of the twenty-fifth special session of the General Assembly (*continued*) (A/59/3 (Chap. I), A/59/198, A/59/382 and E/2004/70)

1. **The Chairman** recalled that in accordance with General Assembly resolution 58/316, section C, paragraph 3 (d), the practice of "question time" had been introduced into all Main Committees with a view to enabling a dynamic and candid exchange with heads of departments and offices. He invited interested delegations to address questions to the Executive Director of the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat).

2. **Ms. Eizema** (Netherlands), speaking on behalf of the European Union, said that the programme activities of UN-Habitat played an important role in achieving the Millennium Development Goals. In his report (A/59/198), the Secretary-General had stated that the linkage between sustainable urbanization policies and poverty reduction strategies needed to be clarified and strengthened in many developing countries. She would like to know the thinking of the Executive Director of UN-Habitat on that issue.

3. **Ms. Tibaijuka** (Executive Director of UN-Habitat) said that sustainable urbanization was a condition for sustainable development. In most developing countries, the urbanization rate was such that by 2030, rural communities would have virtually disappeared and 56 per cent of the world's population would be living in urban areas. Given those circumstances, it would be difficult for developing countries, especially those in Africa, to achieve sustainable development if sustainable urbanization policies were not pursued. Urbanization was so rapid that cities could not fully absorb the new pool of labour, thus giving rise to the phenomenon of urban poverty. With 37 per cent of its population already living in cities, Africa's urbanization rate would be approximately 48 per cent by 2015. In Asia, the rate of urbanization had been less rapid because of agricultural sector development. Over time, urbanization was unavoidable as cities remained the centre of economic growth and attracted people searching for better living conditions. Urban poverty, however, threatened national stability and it was therefore necessary to formulate sustainable urbanization policies. International trade also played a role because if commodity prices in developing countries fell too low, farmers abandoned their occupation and drifted to the towns.

4. **Mr. Mabhonga** (South Africa), referring to paragraphs 12 and 13 of the report contained in document A/59/198, asked the Executive Director of UN-Habitat whether the expert report defining the concept of slums had been fed into subsequent work on that issue or whether that report had been reviewed in light of the objections raised in the Statistics Division. He also wished to know how the problem of the overlapping dates set for the forthcoming sessions of the Commission on Sustainable Development and the Governing Council of UN-Habitat would be resolved, particularly in light of the impending adoption by the Fifth Committee of the report of the Committee on Conferences. He would like to know what the Bureau of the Second Committee thought of that matter which, in his opinion, should be resolved speedily.

5. **Ms. Tibaijuka** (Executive Director of UN-Habitat) recalled that in the 2003 report of UN-Habitat it had been necessary to reach a common understanding of the concept of slums and to list indicators by which to determine whether or not an environment offered decent living conditions. Access to safe drinking water, number of persons per square metre and secure livelihoods were some of the indicators selected. Based on the definition and selected indicators, it had been concluded that 72 per cent of the urban population in Africa, 48 per cent in Asia and 26 per cent in Latin America were slum-dwellers. For the developed countries, the figure was 6 per cent. The methodology used for defining a slum was explained in the above-mentioned report, which she would make available to delegations.

6. Regarding the clash of dates for the sessions of the Commission on Sustainable Development and of the Governing Council of UN-Habitat, the problem was not new and made it difficult for UN-Habitat to contribute to the work of the Commission. At its previous session, the Commission had decided that its subsequent session would be held in May 2005, while the Governing Council of UN-Habitat had already decided to hold its session from 11 to 15 April in Nairobi. The beginning of the Commission's session had then been set for 11 April in New York. The overlapping dates posed a problem for those States that

were members of the Governing Council of UN-Habitat and the matter had been raised with the Secretariat, which had been unable to find a solution and had referred the matter to Member States for their consideration. She did not have the power to change the scheduled dates of the Governing Council sessions and had therefore consulted members of the Committee of Permanent Representatives in Nairobi, who had in turn contacted their counterparts in New York in an effort to find a solution. She had proposed to the Chairman of the Committee in Nairobi the options of moving forward the date for the session of the Governing Council or postponing it until after the session of the Commission on Sustainable Development had been held. For the time being, the Committee planned to shorten the session of the Commission by one day and would meet on 19 October to discuss the matter. In her opinion, the session of the Governing Council could be held one week earlier than had been planned, even if all the documents were not available by then. In any event, her feeling was that human settlements could not be dissociated from the water and sanitation issues that were due to be considered at the next session of the Commission on Sustainable Development.

7. **The Chairman** wondered whether the matter could be resolved in the Second Committee. The Executive Director's idea of moving forward by one week the date of the Governing Council's session seemed to him the best option to date for ensuring full participation also in the session of the Commission on Sustainable Development.

8. **Mr. Kogda** (Burkina Faso) asked whether the issue of the financial resources for UN-Habitat had been addressed at the 2004 World Urban Forum in Barcelona and, if so, whether any proposals had been made to improve the situation.

9. **Mr. Elbakly** (Egypt) wished to know the status of the ongoing discussions between UN-Habitat and the African Development Bank about investing in Africa's urban development along the lines of the cooperation established between UN-Habitat and the Asian Development Bank.

10. **Ms. Tibaijuka** (Executive Director of UN-Habitat), responding to the question asked by the representative of Burkina Faso, said that since the World Urban Forum was not a legislative body, the issue of the financing of the Habitat Agenda had not been raised at the Forum but would be discussed at the next session of the Governing Council. On the issue raised by the representative of Egypt, significant progress had been made in the negotiations with the African Development Bank and an agreement on fast-track lending for sanitation projects in African slums would be signed shortly. In Latin America, similar contacts had been made with the Inter-American Development Bank.

11. **Mr. Gupta** (Canada) said that he supported the Executive Director's proposal to move forward the session of the Governing Council by one week and hoped the problem would not recur in future.

12. **The Chairman** asked whether any progress had been made in cooperation with the World Bank on reducing the number of slum-dwellers and what that meant in the context of the Millennium Development Goals.

13. **Ms. Tibaijuka** (Executive Director of UN-Habitat) said that UN-Habitat was working with the World Bank within the context of the Cities Alliance initiative, which she co-chaired with the World Bank. The areas of cooperation included standard-setting and technical assistance to urban areas in such sectors as water supply and sanitation networks. Because such projects required heavy investments for which UN-Habitat resources alone were not enough, it was necessary to involve the private sector. Moreover, since only Governments could access World Bank lending, the difficulty lay in mobilizing funds for local projects. That was the reason for approaching regional development banks which could provide loans in the local currency, unlike the World Bank whose lending was denominated in dollars, which might expose some countries to the risks of exchange rate fluctuations.

14. **The Chairman** thanked the Executive Director of UN-Habitat for her explanations.

15. **Mr. Al-Athba** (Qatar), speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, said that the challenges of creating sustainable human settlements and providing adequate shelter for all persisted. The only way of surmounting those challenges was to fulfil the commitments made at the Second United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II), the Millennium Summit and the World Summit on Sustainable Development. Noting that, in the previous two years, contributions to the United Nations Habitat and Human Settlements Foundation (UNHHSF) had

increased, he commended those countries which had continued to support both UNHHSF and UN-Habitat.

16. He pointed out the persistent imbalance between earmarked and non-earmarked contributions, which made it difficult for UN-Habitat to plan and implement its work programme. The donor base, moreover, remained low. He therefore urged all Member States to make non-earmarked contributions to UNHHSF on a multi-year basis. He also encouraged them to support the UN-Habitat initiative to develop a facility to raise funds for slum upgrading and other human settlements activities.

17. **Ms. Wang** Ling (China) said that, since 1996, when implementation of the Habitat Agenda had first begun, the issue of human settlements had been tackled with some success at the national level but was still far from being resolved. The vast majority of developing countries continued to face grave challenges in creating sustainable human settlements. In order to achieve the two major goals set by Habitat II, namely, adequate shelter for all and sustainable human settlements in an urbanizing world, and to promote international cooperation in that field for the comprehensive implementation of the Habitat Agenda, three matters in particular should be emphasized.

18. First, human settlements were an important part of sustainable development and should be established on the basis of a scientific theory that took into account such factors as increases in population and productivity in order to ensure the rational exploration of resources and protection of the environment. Furthermore, given that a solution to the problem of human settlements was impossible in the absence of a favourable external environment and effective international cooperation, the international community and the developed countries in particular should show the necessary solidarity with the developing countries by honouring their commitments in the areas of funding, technology, expertise, market access and debt relief. In so doing, they would help to strengthen the capacity of those countries to handle the issue of human settlements. Lastly, since the establishment of a comprehensive partnership was essential to progress in the field of human settlements, and although Governments bore the main responsibility in that area, the extensive involvement of civil society was also essential. Local governments, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), the private sector, women and youth, among others, should therefore bring their enthusiasm and creativity into full play with a view to achieving the objectives of the Habitat Agenda.

19. At the national level, the Chinese Government regarded the issue of human settlements as a top priority. In order to create safe, healthy and liveable human settlements, it was earnestly striving to fulfil the commitments which it had made at Habitat II and at the special session of the General Assembly devoted to human settlements and was actively working with local governments, enterprises and communities in a spirit of partnership. The Chinese population accounted for 22 per cent of the world's population and the continuous improvement in human settlements in China would contribute significantly to the worldwide efforts to develop sustainable human settlements. China was therefore ready to continue and strengthen its communication and cooperation in that field with other countries and with the relevant international organizations, such as UN-Habitat.

20. **Mr. Shamanov** (Russian Federation) said that closer cooperation in the field of human settlements was a prerequisite for sustainable development. He endorsed the recommendations for strengthening cooperation within the United Nations system in the field of human settlements contained in the report of the Secretary-General on implementation of the outcome of Habitat II and strengthening of UN-Habitat (A/59/198). The status of UN-Habitat as a Programme appeared to have had a positive effect on its results. The adoption of new initiatives, including the establishment of broad partnership networks and the holding of the World Urban Forum in Barcelona in 2004, had also given impetus to UN-Habitat, the implementation of the Programme and to the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals and of the goals of the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation in regard to human settlements. The World Urban Forum, in particular, had provided politicians, workers and experts with the opportunity to make an extremely productive contribution to the consideration of a wide range of current urbanization and human settlement problems.

21. Despite that positive impetus, however, it was still too early to say whether progress was being made in resolving human settlement problems. It was therefore imperative to adopt additional measures to enhance efficiency and it would be particularly useful to conduct regular policy reviews on the basis of the experience acquired. Coordination among specialized

institutions should also be strengthened by more widely utilizing the potential of the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination (CEB) and the United Nations Development Group, as well as by extending the monitoring networks, particularly at the local and regional levels. It was also essential to create mechanisms for evaluating the effectiveness of the projects implemented. In addition, a greater focus on results would facilitate the identification of core areas of concern (creation of modern infrastructures, water supply, sanitation, elimination of slums and shanty towns, etc.) and serve as a catalyst for implementing the Habitat Agenda as a whole. It would be useful, moreover, to adopt measures designed to encourage the most disadvantaged members of the population to participate in home construction programmes, as was currently being done in the Russian Federation.

22. The question of the level of resources needed for the implementation of the Habitat Agenda should be kept under review. It should be noted in that connection that the Cities Alliance had a large reserve, which had been built up in partnership with the World Bank. The measures taken by UN-Habitat to mobilize additional resources through that type of partnership deserved the support of all.

23. **Mr. Esan** (Nigeria) said that his delegation endorsed the statement made by the representative of Qatar on behalf of the Group of 77 and China and regretted the loss of human life and the destruction caused by the recent hurricanes and storms in Grenada, the Bahamas, Haiti, Jamaica, Cuba and many parts of the southern United States of America. Such natural phenomena highlighted the problems associated with human settlements, but the world had no need for natural disasters in order to appreciate that adequate shelter was the key to health and sanitation. Failure to provide good shelter would seriously jeopardize investments for poverty eradication and the campaign to significantly improve the lives of slum-dwellers.

24. Against that background, Nigeria saluted the commendable efforts of UN-Habitat to bring visibility to Millennium Development Goal 7 (targets 10 and 11). Particular thanks were due to the Executive Director of UN-Habitat for her tireless and eloquent advocacy on behalf of slum-dwellers. For many developing countries, implementation of the Habitat Agenda remained a daunting challenge owing to such problems as poverty, disease and unemployment. The international community should therefore show greater political commitment through concrete interventions in order to ensure achievement of the Habitat Agenda and the Millennium Development Goals.

25. For its part, the Nigerian Government had reaffirmed its commitment to those objectives, which, together with the goals of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), it had integrated into a new national development strategy designed to ensure their full implementation within the desired time frame.

26. As the Secretary-General had once again pointed out in his report (A/59/198), the funding for UN-Habitat was not commensurate with its priorities and Nigeria shared his view that the higher levels of special-purpose contributions made it difficult for UN-Habitat "to plan its financial commitments and implement its work programme around strategically focused goals". With only four countries accounting for 60 per cent of the general-purpose contributions programme implementation was dependent on money rather than need. The international community should therefore take steps to broaden both the volume and quality of the donor base.

27. Rapid urbanization, especially in Africa, was a threat to sustainable development and could not coexist with high population growth. UN-Habitat was therefore to be commended for its Sustainable Cities Programme and for the Global Urban Observatory. In that regard, Nigeria welcomed the partnership between UN-Habitat and NEPAD.

28. **Mr. Amayo** (Kenya) said that his delegation endorsed the statement made by Qatar on behalf of the Group of 77 and China. Kenya was committed to the implementation of the Habitat Agenda and of the Declaration on Cities and Other Human Settlements in the New Millennium as well as to the strengthening of the United Nations Habitat and Human Settlements Foundation. Programme implementation was, however, being hampered by inadequate funding, a problem which was further compounded by the persistent imbalance between special-purpose and other types of contributions. The fact that special-purpose contributions to the Foundation remained higher made it difficult for UN-Habitat to plan and carry out its work programme. Increased and predictable general-purpose funding was therefore necessary to give the

Executive Director more flexibility in the implementation of the programmes.

29. The establishment by the Executive Director of the Water and Sanitation Trust Fund would make it considerably easier to achieve the goal of reducing the number of people without access to drinking water or sanitation. His Government also welcomed the efforts of the Executive Director to promote closer cooperation with local authorities and other partners in the area of human settlements. Those endeavours must be pursued in the period leading up to the next session of the Governing Council and the next World Urban Forum.

30. In implementation of the Habitat Agenda and the national plan of action at the national and local levels, his Government, in collaboration with UN-Habitat and with the support of the Cities Alliance and other partners, had launched the Kenya slum upgrading programme, which was aimed at improving the situation of people living and working in slums and informal settlements through the provision of infrastructures, services, housing and income-generating activities. The programme provided for the participation of communities and other stakeholders and for utilizing their advantages in order to maximize results. A memorandum of understanding to that effect had been signed between his Government and UN-Habitat in January 2003.

31. On the question of housing, a paper on national housing policy covering a five-year period contained proposals for facilitating the construction of 150,000 housing units in urban areas each year and the improvement of 300,000 units in rural areas. The Government was finalizing the formulation of a National Housing Development Programme and developing a national land and land-use policy. Furthermore, the maintenance of the road network had been streamlined through the Roads 2000 Programme. The use of labour-intensive methods was helping to create jobs in rural areas while providing the improved road network that was required for economic growth.

32. With regard to governance and decentralization, his Government had launched local government reforms and was introducing mechanisms designed to enhance the accountability and transparency of local authorities. A decentralization policy was being prepared which would define the powers, functions, roles and duties of local authorities and their relationship with the central Government.

33. In conclusion, despite the achievements of the previous year, human settlements had suffered from such setbacks as the HIV/AIDS pandemic, floods and other natural and man-made disasters. Concerted efforts at the national level and supported by the international community were therefore necessary.

34. **Mr. Chowdhury** (Bangladesh) said that his delegation supported the statement made by Qatar on behalf of the Group of 77 and China. The pace of urbanization was increasing worldwide and more than half of the world's population now lived in urban areas. At the same time, urban poverty, especially in developing countries, resulted in the expansion of slums. Sustainable urbanization was therefore one of the most pressing challenges facing the international community and UN-Habitat was specially mandated to promote sustainable urban development, shelter for all, better living conditions for slum-dwellers, access to drinking water and sanitation, social inclusion, environmental protection and other very basic rights. The strategic framework for 2006-2007 had set the overall goal of improving the living and working environment for all through a more effective and transparent management system. Enhancing the role of women as active participants and beneficiaries was another concern of UN-Habitat. The Millennium Declaration had established the target of significantly improving the lives of at least 100 million slum-dwellers by 2020.

35. The Global Urban Observatory set up by UN-Habitat and technical cooperation projects were contributing to government initiatives in sustainable urban development policy. Cooperation should be strengthened, especially with local authorities, parliamentarians, women, youth, the academic community, civil society organizations and community-based organizations. In that connection, it was encouraging to learn that Habitat programme managers were assigned to United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) country offices to assist resident coordinators.

36. Bangladesh had established a national committee for the implementation of the Habitat Agenda as well as a national urban observatory committee. The Government, with the assistance of UN-Habitat and with UNDP funding, had started the programme "Local

Partnerships for Urban Poverty Alleviation". The Secretary-General had correctly recognized that good progress had been made in Bangladesh in promoting joint urban development initiatives.

37. Contributions to UN-Habitat were well below target. Sixty per cent of general-purpose contributions came from four countries. Implementation of UN-Habitat programmes was therefore seriously constrained. UN-Habitat received only $4 million annually from bilateral and multilateral donors for housing and urban infrastructure projects, even as recent estimates suggested that $184 million were needed to meet the target that had been set. UN-Habitat must be provided with the resources it needed to fulfil its mandate and innovative financing strategies were urgently required.

38. The practice of partnerships within and outside the United Nations system was one of the strengths of UN-Habitat, which should also play a role in disaster mitigation and rehabilitation programmes covering urban settlements. It could help Governments to strengthen their capacity to handle natural and man-made disasters. Structural flaws should also be addressed simultaneously in urban and rural areas. Developing countries required special help with capacity-building, as well as technical and financial assistance. Closer cooperation between UN-Habitat and other relevant entities would facilitate the implementation of the mandate of the Programme.

39. Urban poverty would have to be tackled if the fight against poverty envisaged in the Millennium Declaration was to succeed. Historically, urban issues had been marginalized in the development agenda. The role of cities in sustainable development was enormous. His Government was determined to improve its people's lot, but its resources were inadequate; outside assistance and support were therefore vital.

40. **Mr. Subedi** (Nepal) said that his delegation associated itself with the statement made by the representative of Qatar on behalf of the Group of 77 and China. Among other Goals, the Millennium Declaration envisaged achieving a considerable improvement in the living conditions of at least 100 million slum-dwellers by 2020, and halving by 2015 the number of people without access to safe drinking water. At a time when the world's powers were spending enormous sums of money on arms and ammunition, nearly half of the world's population was living on less than two dollars a day, and one fifth on less than a dollar a day. Halving the number of people living in poverty by 2015 would therefore be a difficult task.

41. The wave of urbanization that all countries were experiencing was intensifying and exerting pressure on land, housing and sanitation. As a result, poverty was becoming an urban phenomenon. The Secretary-General had rightly pointed out that in many developing countries poverty-reduction strategies were not being linked to sustainable urbanization policies. The problem of slums could not be eliminated overnight and long-term plans were necessary, but poverty was the root cause of slums.

42. It was heartening that progress had been made on some fronts. Governments were increasing their support to UN-Habitat and to the Human Settlements Foundation, and, as the Secretary-General indicated in paragraph 2 of his report (A/59/198), contributions had increased. New initiatives were being taken, and the Secretary-General rightly underscored that UN-Habitat should continue to strengthen its cooperation with the United Nations system. Nepal also welcomed the partnership with the Cities Alliance and the support that UN-Habitat provided to numerous Governments through the establishment of local, national and regional urban observatories to contribute to the development of urban policies. In addition, the idea of strengthening the UN-Habitat Global Urban Observatory (GUO) was commendable.

43. The fight against poverty, the provision of safe drinking water, sanitation and housing were interlinked and investments should be made in plans and programmes to benefit the poor. In Nepal, the Government was in the process of creating a conducive environment to that end, particularly for investments in drinking water, sanitation and housing. The Tenth Development Plan, which began in 2003, incorporated shelter and urbanization issues into national development policies.

44. Nepal had participated actively in the twelfth session of the Commission on Sustainable Development and was committed to the full and effective implementation of the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation. UN-Habitat should also work in close cooperation with the Commission on Sustainable Development. It was evident that if the Habitat Agenda was not effectively implemented, poverty could never

be halved by 2015. More resources were required to support the activities of the Governments of poor countries. Therefore Nepal urged the international community, particularly the financial institutions, to increase their support to UN-Habitat so that it had the necessary resources to implement its programmes.

45. **Mr. Ghafari** (United States of America) said that in addressing the phenomenon of the urbanization of poverty, Governments and business and community leaders should make a sustained effort to eradicate poverty and to take responsibility for upgrading slums and investing in infrastructure. They should do this by fully including the poor who, far from being passive recipients of aid, were a key development resource.

46. The United States believed that eradicating slums was a national and local matter, involving all classes and all sectors of society, which should work together to improve governance, establish the rule of law, maintain transparency, secure property rights, combat corruption and open markets. Strong institutions should be established capable of providing shelter to the neediest and making the long-range investments necessary to sustain cities as engines of growth.

47. The United States deemed it critical to guarantee the right to possess and transfer property, which fuelled the spirit of enterprise that was vital to economic development. While the Government took responsibility for defining norms, developing strategies and allocating subsidies, the most pressing housing problems were settled at the local level. Faith-based or secular associations, very active in poor neighbourhoods, were responsible for the construction and rehabilitation of low-income housing and for developing shopping areas and community centres, distributing meals to the elderly, providing job training, offering financial counselling and providing other services necessary to support a healthy community life, particularly for women and children.

48. The United States fully supported the role of UN-Habitat in gathering and disseminating knowledge about best practices in the field of housing.

49. **Ms. Hewavitharana** (Sri Lanka) said that her delegation associated itself with the statement made by the representative of Qatar on behalf of the Group of 77 and China. Millions of people around the world were without shelter or lived in slums, where poverty was a permanent feature of urban life, and it had become evident that to fight against poverty, security of tenure had to be guaranteed. That meant the right to property, which stimulated the spirit of enterprise and better management of urban affairs by giving the poor, in particular women, the possibility of participating in decisions to improve their status.

50. In the face of the steady increase in their urban populations, developing countries had to make other political choices and seek to rehabilitate slums rather than demolish them, and to resettle slum-dwellers in low-cost housing rather than relocate them in informal settlements elsewhere. To do so, however, they needed financial support as well as the transfer of technological know-how. UN-Habitat must itself be able to rely on much larger voluntary contributions to work effectively.

51. The Government of Sri Lanka regarded the urban centres that were emerging all over the country as a major driving force in the expansion of its economy. In anticipation of a doubling of its urban population over the next 20 years, it had focused on mobilizing credit and other forms of financing for private housing construction. It had launched a plan for financing low-income and middle-income housing to encourage the construction of private housing. The Government of Sri Lanka had set itself the goal of building 100,000 housing units with water and sanitation service amenities for slum-dwellers from all sectors, including plantation workers, victims of natural disasters, fishermen, migrant workers and poor city dwellers.

52. **Mr. Gregoire** (Dominica), speaking on behalf of the member States of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), associated himself with the statement made by Qatar on behalf of the Group of 77 and China. The question of human settlements had particular significance for CARICOM, whose members, small island developing States, were used to repairing the often considerable damage caused by natural disasters. CARICOM fully supported the establishment of national information systems which identified and assessed risks in certain zones so that they could be integrated into the planning and design of settlements.

53. The implementation of the Habitat Agenda, while it had progressed, was still impeded by poverty, whose scope should not be overestimated. Developing countries and the least developed countries still lacked the institutional, economic and technical means to effectively fight against it and to improve the situation

of the poor in terms of housing, which was the key to sustainable development.

54. CARICOM recognized the work done by the United Nations organizations to guarantee everyone security of tenure and to improve urban governance. It believed that resources for funding emergency operations should be mobilized sufficiently early rather than in reaction to a catastrophe. CARICOM supported the Disaster Management Programme of UN-Habitat, which helped Governments, local authorities and local populations deal with natural or man-made disasters.

55. The Government of Dominica placed housing and education at the top of its agenda and provided low-income persons with opportunities for purchasing or rehabilitating their homes. The programme, which was financed by the Caribbean Development Bank, was part of its social and economic development strategy to reduce poverty and improve the status of the most vulnerable in society. It was also a question of allowing the Government to formulate a real housing strategy and to provide technical support to low-income households in home design, retrofitting techniques and safe construction practices. The Government of Dominica was continuing to explore new sources of financing for the construction of low-income housing.

56. **Ms. Adriaanse** (International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies) said that improving the living conditions of the millions of slum-dwellers was part of safeguarding the environment and called for a strong global partnership. The problem of slums concerned developed countries as much as developing countries and slum-dwellers were often society's forgotten members, who had no role in decision-making.

57. The Federation was aware of the difficulty of prescribing general solutions and hoped only to be able to count on the cooperation of Governments to jointly address the vulnerabilities of people in human settlements. Members of the Federation listed as part of their agenda the training of teenage slum-dwellers in AIDS prevention, the creation of housing programmes that took account of women's needs, health requirements, religious diversity and educational needs and the installation of water supply and sanitation systems in low-income areas with the participation of the slum-dwellers themselves.

58. The Federation also intended to cooperate more closely with the Governments of developed countries, where slums were the breeding ground for other types of social, economic and political problems.

The meeting rose at 12.30 p.m.